DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 302 682 CE 051 686

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TITLE A Redefined Federal Role in Adult Literacy: Integrated Policies, Programs, and Procedures. Background Paper Prepared for Project on Adult Literacy.
INSTITUTION Southport Inst. for Policy Analysis, Inc., CT.
PUB DATE Dec 88
NOTE 84p.; For related documents, see CE 051 679-685.
AVAILABLE FROM The Project on Adult Literacy, Suite 415, 440 First Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20001.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adult Basic Education; *Adult Literacy; Educational Change; Educational Policy; *Federal Government; *Government Role; *Literacy Education; Policy Formation; Program Administration; Program Development; *Program Improvement; Public Policy

ABSTRACT

The Federal Government has been funding state- and locally operated adult literacy programs for nearly 25 years. Unfortunately, despite the best intentions and efforts, the federal initiative in adult literacy has been minimal, inefficient, and ineffective. There has been no consistent federal policy guiding the growth of programs since 1965. Neither has there been any mechanism for coordination among literacy efforts. There are three options for revising the existing organization structure for literacy programs within the Department of Education. The first is to consolidate existing programs into an existing federal agency, the second is to create an independent agency on adult literacy, and the third is to strengthen the existing structure. The Federal Government must formulate short- and long-term objectives to address the many problems facing adult literacy programming. The following are among the main problems facing adult literacy: unnecessary fragmentation of federal programs, programs with inconsistent and contradictory purposes, no systematic research agenda, no accountability at any level, no structured data collection and reporting system, no effective dissemination system, no coordination or cooperation among and between programs, and seriously inadequate funding. (MN)

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A REDEFINED FEDERAL ROLE IN ADULT LITERACY: INTEGRATED POLICIES, PROGRAMS, AND PROCEDURES

by

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Background Paper Prepared for

Project on Adult Literacy

of the

Southport Institute for Policy Analysis

December 1988

CE051686

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FOREWORD

This paper is one of several prepared by consultants to The Project on Adult Literacy sponsored by the Southport Institute for Policy Analysis. The papers were commissioned to help the Project's staff develop an in-depth understanding of various issues and perspectives bearing on the federal role in promoting adult literacy.

In total, seven papers were commissioned. They were prepared during the fall of 1988. The consultants who prepared them met as a group five times during that period and vigorously debated each other's work as well as other issues concerning adult literacy. At no time during this process did the Project's staff require that the consultants agree with each other or with the conclusions being formulated by the staff. The consultants were given complete freedom to state their own ideas.

As a result, the views expressed in this paper are those of the author alone. They do not necessarily reflect the views of the Southport Institute, the Project on Adult Literacy or any of the other consultants involved with the Project's work.

The Southport Institute is making these working papers available to help increase understanding and stimulate discussion about the problems of adult literacy and as an expression of gratitude for the contribution of the authors to the Project on Adult Literacy.

The working papers prepared for the Project are:

Judith A. Alamprese:	Adult Research and Development: An Agenda for Action
William B. Bliss:	Providing Adult Basic Education Services to Adults with Limited English Proficiency
Jack A. Brizius:	The State Role in Adult Literacy Policy
Paul V. Delker and William J. Yakowicz:	Toward the Vision of a Literate Society
Susan E. Foster:	Professionalization of the Adult Literacy Workforce
Arnold Packer:	Retooling the American Workforce: The Role of Technology in Improving Adult Literacy During the 1990s
William F. Pierce:	A Redefined Federal Role in Adult Literacy: Integrated Policies, Programs, and Procedures

These papers are available from: The Project on Adult Literacy, Suite 415, 440 First Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20001, (202) 783-7058.

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A REDEFINED FEDERAL ROLE IN ADULT LITERACY: INTEGRATED POLICIES, PROGRAMS, AND PROCEDURES

by

William F. Pierce

OVERVIEW: THE PROBLEM IN TODAY'S PERSPECTIVE

For almost 25 years the federal government has funded programs designed to assist the states and local communities in reducing the numbers of adults whose level of basic skills are so minimal as to make them only partially functional in the workplace and in the community. As well meaning as the administrators of these programs have been, and as hard as federal, state, and local officials have tried, the federal initiative in adult literacy has been minimal, inefficient and ineffective.

As will be discussed, there are a variety of reasons for our notable lack of success in the area of literacy enhancement at the federal level. First, Congressional and administrative interest in the issue has been minimal as reflected by the fact that only about 40 percent of authorized funds have actually been appropriated.

Second, there is no consistent federal policy which has guided the growth of programs since 1965. Third, although there has been a growth of programs outside the original Adult Education Act, there has been no consistency in target groups served, program purposes, or program placement. Fourth, there has been no mechanism for coordination among these programs. Fifth, the basic federal vehicle for addressing adult literacy is badly flawed because at the federal level it makes no provisions for:

a. Systematic data collection and reporting;

b. Research and development;

c. Teacher training and teacher education;

d. Professionalization of the field;

e. Materials development; and

f. Dissemination and network development of state and local accountability.

Sixth, the placement of the basic program within an agency dedicated to serving children and youth has ensured minimal attention to the needs of adults from the outset.

There is now, however, a new imperative to solve the nation's adult literacy problem. Because of the magnitude of changes in national and international competitiveness during the last decade, adult illiteracy may well become a matter of national economic survival.

Where illiteracy used to affect only the individual nonliterate adult, it now affects you and me. Where it formally resulted in reduced earning power for the individual, it will also result in reduced earning power for the company or business, the state, and the nation.

The nature of our workplace has changed dramatically in the last few years. The operative phrases are now demographic shifts, international competition, service economy, higher workplace skill requirements, and increasingly lower work force skill attainment. This, coupled with a shrinking youth cohort, has led employers to understand that helping the illiterate adult become literate may well be the only way that employers can remain competitive. Businessmen and women, public and private sector employers are interested in correcting a problem that not only

affects their "bottom line," and also determines whether they even have a "bottom line."

Consequently, later than necessary, later than it should have been, and certainly due in large measure to the failed federal adult literacy policies of the last 25 years, business leaders now recognize the importance of human resource development. Without human resource development, business leaders will be forced to exercise other, less desirable options to compensate for an inadequately trained and skilled work force. They can try to automate to make up for a severely limited work force, or they can send their jobs offshore where the work will be done by better skilled and less costly workers. Neither of those alternatives are desirable from the standpoint of the American worker or the nation's social fabric. What follows is a description of the current federal initiative in adult literacy and suggestions for change which will make it unnecessary for American businessmen to exercise those undesirable options. Workplace literacy, rather than its 25 year old parent, adult literacy, must become the focus of the federal adult literacy initiatives of the future. And the call for such a fundamental change in focus must be sounded by the next President and must become a cornerstone of the next administration.

THE HISTORY OF FEDERAL INVOLVEMENT IN ADULT LITERACY

In comparison to other federal education and training initiatives, adult literacy programs are relatively new. The first of them, the Adult Education Act, began with the Great Society. Under the leadership of Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, the period 1963 to 1966 was, without

question, the most prolific legislative period for education in our nation's history. During those amazing years, Congress enacted the Economic Opportunity Act, the Higher Education Act, and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

In the ten to twelve years prior to that flurry of federal legislation, the American education system realized some of its greatest advancements, and also suffered its greatest trauma. In terms of advancements, educators had began to realize the promise of equal access to education for everyone. The numbers of eligible students attending school had began to climb significantly. At the same time, the dual education system was judged to be separate and decidedly unequal. Social unrest and blatant discrimination put an ugly stain on our country. President Eisenhower called out federal troops to ensure that the law of the land was obeyed and that minority students had equal access to state universities. As the nation's social awareness and concern for equality and equal access at the elementary and secondary levels grew, a few farsighted leaders began to realize that the United States was also developing a pool of unskilled and, therefore, unemployed or underemployed individuals.

As a result, President Kennedy directed the nation's attention to the problem of adult literacy during his 1963 State of the Union address. In response, the first legislation focusing specifically on adult basic education was enacted by Congress as Title IIB of the Economic Development Act of 1964. For two years, adult basic education was the administrative responsibility of the Office of Economic Opportunity. Apparently the administrators of OEO decided not to get into the

education business because its initial appropriation of $18,612,000 was transferred to the U.S. Office of Education for implementation.

The document, A History of the Adult Education Act, published by the National Advisory Council on Adult Education (NACAE) in 1980, states that 37,991 adults received basic skills instruction during that first year. With the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, for the first time in the history of the nation, the federal government began providing funds to elementary and secondary, nonvocational education, in-school students. Many local and state educators had resisted the new legislation as the harbinger of federal control of education. Federal, state and local educators were just beginning to turn their attention to implementing the new laws and trying to develop and interpret the new regulations relating to disadvantaged elementary and secondary students. Even so, in 1966, without fanfare or debate, and apparently without much thought about the historic focus of the American public education system, Congress transferred Title IIB of the Economic Opportunity Act to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. In doing so, they assigned the responsibility for improving adult literacy to education administrators and teachers who were neither experienced with providing adult services nor especially dedicated to doing so.

In retrospect, this assignment has been a key factor in adult literacy programs being allowed to languish. Congress had other options. Like Job Corps, which also originated in the Economic Opportunity Act, they could just as easily have transferred the Adult Basic Education Programs to the Department of Labor.

One can only surmise that such an action might have been advantageous to the subsequent growth and development of adult literacy programs. Department of Labor programs are certainly not without fault and DoL administrators at the federal and state level are just as guilty of inflexibility and poor judgement as any other group of bureaucrats. One thing can be said for certain, however, had the Adult Education Act been transferred to Labor from OEO, it would at least have been assigned to an agency that was dedicated to serving adults, not children and youth.

We see then, a stand-alone program, inherited from another agency and other legislation, placed in an agency whose principal commitment lies with children and youth. Given that environment, how well did the administrators of the Adult Basic Education program at the federal, state and local levels do?

THE ADULT EDUCATION ACT
THE BASIC FEDERAL INITIATIVE

Program Accomplishments

Dedicated people overcome almost insurmountable odds in very creative ways. That statement characterizes the accomplishments of those dedicated to this country's adult education programs.

For almost 25 years, the adult literacy practitioners have functioned without a well-developed support system. There has been no systematic research agenda on adult literacy or adult education, there has been no formal network, a clearing house of best practices and new demonstrations has come and gone, and the development of formal teacher training programs has been episodic and uncoordinated. Even so, there exists enough

federal, state, and locally developed curricular materials, operational teacher education programs, trained professional staff and administrators, organized volunteers, and state generated research efforts to argue that a rudimentary field of adult literacy does exist, in spite of the lack of a systematic approach to the development of the field. An initial small federal initiative, backed up by overworked but dedicated state administrators, local practitioners, and volunteers, have carved out and, under enormous odds, maintained a national adult literacy initiative. To some extent, this nation has a better delivery system for adult training than it deserves. Unfortunately, statements such as that are more reflective of conventional wisdom, anecdotal examples, and commonly accepted truths--some real, some myth--than they are of analyses based on sound data. The absence of a defensible data collection, retrieval, analysis and reporting system for adult literacy programs represents one of its major weaknesses. A weakness which, if we are to develop appropriate federal policies and programs devoted to the enhancement of adult literacy, must be corrected. This discussion of program accomplishments is undertaken with a sensitivity to and awareness of that weakness.

A Gradual Growth Curve in Funding

Federal appropriations for Adult Education have grown from $20.7 million in 1966 to $162 million in 1989. Although Congress has appropriated, on average, only about 40 percent of its authorized level for this program, federal funds have grown by about 770 percent since those early OEO days. This appropriation provides federal funds of only $52 per adult basic education student. However, the actual per student expenditure across the nation ranges from $27 to $505, with the 1986

national average at $132 per student. Obviously, the states are providing additional resources beyond the ten percent match required by the law. As a matter of fact, the Federal Division of Adult Education reports that from 1976 to 1988 the federal share of total expenditures for adult literacy has increased 50 percent in current dollars and *decreased* 13 percent in constant 1985 dollars. At the same time, the state and local share increased 449 percent in current dollars and 221 percent in constant 1985 dollars. In 1986, the U.S. Department of Education reported a total expenditure of $405 million for an adult student population of about 3.1 million. These expenditures allow over 75,000 adult teaching and administrative personnel and over 100,000 volunteers to provide adult literacy programs in every state and the majority of local school and community college districts.

Minimal Growth of Professionalism

According to a 1987 report by the Division of Adult Education in the U.S. Department of Education, 54 institutions of higher education offer some type of adult education teacher or administrator training programs. However, according to that report entitled Guide to ABE in Graduate Programs, only one institution offers a bachelors program in adult basic education.

Those 54 institutions represent an important foundation for professionalism. Unfortunately, by comparison, it is shamefully small after a 25 year investment in adult basic education programs. Fifty-four programs in the 1872 four year institutions offering teacher education programs represents programs in barely three percent of the potential institutions in almost 25 years.

This level of teacher training activity reflects several characteristics of the adult education delivery system. First, since there are so few teachers trained as adult educators, local administrators have no choice but to use part-time teachers and volunteers. According to a report by the U.S. Department of Education's Division of Adult Education, teachers comprise 84 percent of part-time personnel. Second, many adult literacy programs are offered in the afternoon and evening to accommodate the teacher's availability rather than the adult learner's needs. Third, many adult literacy programs are offered in elementary and secondary schools and, consequently, cannot begin until after the elementary and secondary students are gone. Fourth, some teachers' unions support the existing reliance on part-time teachers, and resist more professionalism, in order to ensure "moonlighting" opportunities for their members.

Some Research and Development

From 1966 until 1974, the federal office administering the Adult Education Act conducted a small discretionary research and demonstration program. These moderate funds were used to begin building the research, demonstration, materials production, teacher training and dissemination system that any mature fields of interest must have to be both professional and effective. These funds laid the foundation for the rudimentary support system that exists today. Later the states were asked to assume the responsibility for building and maintaining that support system. Consequently, as a part of section 310 of the Adult Education Act, from 1974 until 1987, each state was required to spend at

least ten percent of its federal grant for "special experimental demonstration projects and teacher training." 1/ In addition, many of the projects have developed materials that are useful to adult educators throughout the country. For about 13 years, these Section 310 projects have represented the only federal contribution to the development of the field.

As should be expected, as effective as individual projects might have been, this approach led to 50 different sets of uncoordinated priorities and research needs being addressed. Therefore, there was no national presence in those projects, no uniform planning, no maximizing the effectiveness of expenditures, no coordination, and no long-range research agenda. It has only been since 1988 that modest amounts of funds have once again been made available at the federal level to allow a systematic, coordinated program to address national priorities.

Steadily Growing Numbers Served

As the numbers of training sites and available teachers and administrators grew, so did the numbers of adult participants in the adult literacy program. Beginning with 37,991 participants in 1965 while the program was still under the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, the number of annual participants has increased by more than 700 percent in the intervening 21 years through 1986. Indeed, over the last six years alone, participation has increased by 41 percent. Total participation now exceeds 3.1 million annually.

Although the Adult Education program has always provided services to significant numbers and percentages of minorities, over the last few

years program administrators have responded aggressively to the explosion of participants requiring English as a Second Language (ESL). As a result of this almost unprecedented growth, by 1986 the ESL enrollment in 10 states exceeded 48 percent of the total ABE enrollment. ESL enrollments in those states ranged from almost 49 percent in Hawaii to 86 percent in California. Nor are those ten states an exception. In 1978, ESL participants accounted for 32 percent of the total national ABE enrollment, by 1986 that figure had grown to 57 percent.

The growth of participants in the ESL program has closely paralleled the pattern of immigration into this country during those years. Asian participants increased by 241 percent and Hispanic enrollments rose by 131 percent during that eight year period. These numbers have brought incredible pressure on state and local service providers to find teachers and volunteers who can work with individuals for whom English is a second language. To their enormous credit, they have been able to meet much of the need. Their efforts on behalf of those needing ESL training are now being stretched even further as a result of yet another wave of non-English speakers seeking assistance because of the recent immigrant amnesty program.

What some view as a positive reflection on adult education service providers, others posit might be actually accepting the path of least resistance. After all, those needing ESL services are easily identifiable, do not view the need for those services as a stigma, are highly motivated, eager to learn, and will overcome almost any barrier to attend class regularly. Consequently, this growth in ESL may

represent a form of "skimming." Adult Education administrators and teachers need only sit back and wait, and the classes will fill with self motivated, self-directed students.

Since the initiation of the federal adult literacy program in 1965, approximately 31 million adults in need of improved basic skills have received some degree of assistance. Placed in perspective, that represents about 27 percent of the current labor force. To put it in another perspective, however, the number of adults receiving basic skills instruction during the past 22 years is about equal to the estimated number of adults *currently* in need of improved basic skills.

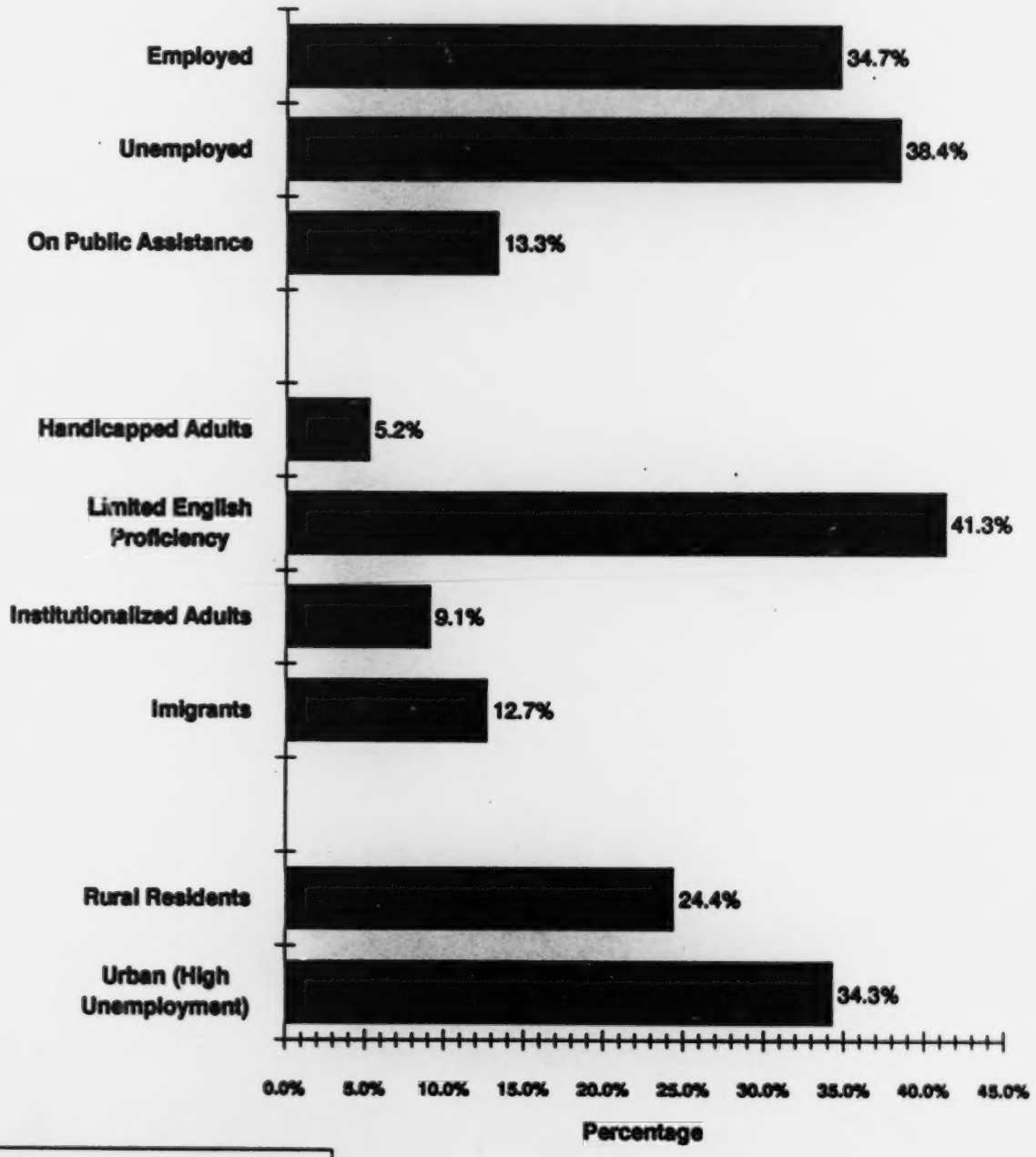
In summary, the nation's adult education program has helped meet the basic skill needs of a great many people by providing them with services unavailable elsewhere. And, to a great extent, the program providers have been successful in attracting a widely diverse participant group. Figure 1 shows the percentage of individuals, during the 1986 program year, who possessed particular characteristics. Although not shown on this chart, it is interesting to note that, consistent with the growth of women in the labor market, during the last decade females have averaged about 55 percent of all program participants during the last eight years.

Completion Rates

As commendable as this input data appears to be, the question remains, what difference did their involvement in an adult basic education program make to the participants? Data reported to the federal government by state and local service providers indicates that,

Figure 1

CHARACTERISTICS OF ENTRY LEVEL PARTICIPANTS
(DUPLICATED COUNT)
PROGRAM YEAR 1985-86



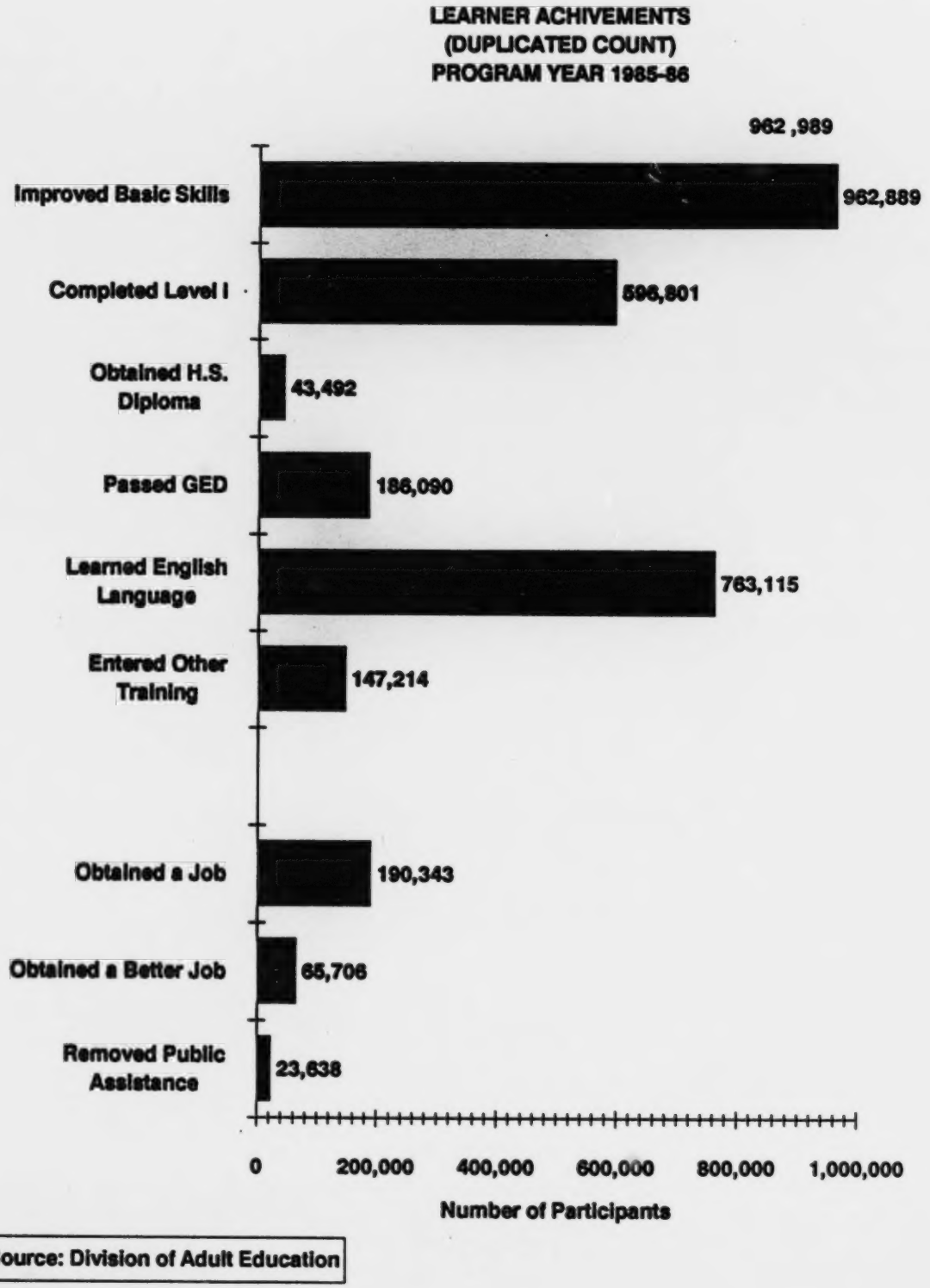
Source: Division of Adult Education

for those who completed their objectives, there were a wide variety of positive outcomes. Figure 2 illustrates the composite of learner achievements for the 1986 participants.

Obviously this chart suffers from some serious discrepancies in data collection. It is hard to understand how, in a year when only 400,000 participants completed their objectives and another 444,000 left the program without having completed their objectives, that 962,889 participants can be said to have improved their basic skills. One can only assume that the additional 118,889 individuals are still enrolled but have been judged to have improved their skills over what they possessed when they entered the program; program providers assume that those who left without completing also improved their skills. In addition, it is not clear that the learner's objectives paralleled the categories in figure 2 and that by meeting their objectives they actually learned something.

These data, reporting discrepancies aside, the numbers of individuals purported to have benefitted dramatically from the program is impressive. Federal and state administrators profess that the principal federal adult literacy program has resulted in significant improvements in the personal and economic condition of millions of people and in every state. Those improvements, it is argued, have also accrued potentially greater federal tax dollar returns to the nation through reduced social welfare and other support payments. It can also be argued that, because of their increased ability to understand the written word and written arguments, successful participants are also better able to carry out their responsibilities as citizens.

Figure 2



Source: Division of Adult Education

Consequently, one can argue that the federal program has been very successful. What is under discussion is rather a matter of degree. Could the program have been significantly more successful? The answer appears to be a resounding *yes*!

Program Weaknesses

As successful as the adult basic education practitioners have been, and as understandably defensive of its accomplishments as they may become, as mentioned earlier, there are a number of obvious weaknesses in the current federal adult literacy program. These weaknesses fall into several categories.

Legislative Structure = Low Budget Priority

As mentioned earlier, the current Adult Education Act, whose genesis was the Adult *Basic* Education Programs of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, has been from its inception the administrative responsibility of the nation's education community, and for the most part, the *elementary* and *secondary* part of that community. The assumption that adult literacy programs should be the responsibility of federal, state, and local *elementary* and *secondary* educational policymakers was shortsighted and unrealistic. Elementary and secondary educators, neither by training nor inclination, are interested in the plight of adults. Therefore, assigning the Adult Basic Education program to the U.S. Office of Education at the federal level and delegating its administration to the State Departments of Education at the state level ensured its second class status.

In the Educational Amendment of 1972, Congress mandated that vocational education be given equal authority with other education programs in the federal bureaucracy, removed vocational education from under the administrative control of a "general" educator, and placed it on a par with other programs within the U.S. Office of Education. In doing so Congress created a Bureau of Occupational and Adult Education. They left it up to the policymakers in the Office of Education, most of whom were trained elementary or secondary educators, or at best, vocational educators, to decide the programmatic and organizational emphases that would be placed on adult education. It is not surprising, therefore, that it remained as a division within the Bureau, rather than being elevated to the next higher level.

This placement has also affected the funding level of the program. Since the early 60's there haven't been enough federal funds to meet the perceived federal role in education. Consequently, for federal educators to actively seek additional funds for adults, was to simultaneously seek fewer funds for children and youth. The initial assignment of ABE to the federal education system, therefore, pitted disenfranchised adults against handicapped children, vocational education students, disadvantaged students, and high school graduates needing assistance to go to college.

The net effect was, therefore, that the needs of millions of illiterate or functionally illiterate adults were left in the hands of only minimally attentive federal policy and decision makers. Little wonder then, that unskilled, voiceless, voteless, and essentially powerless adults never had a chance! Nor is it little wonder that over

the last 24 years Congress has appropriated only about 40 percent of the funds it has authorized for the Adult Education Act. A 40 percent appropriation vs. authorization ratio for the adult literacy program since 1964 suggests that the program has been constantly buried among higher priority programs within the Department of Education.

Part-time Teachers = Part-time Interest

The 64,753 part-time adult education teachers are essential to the current structure and current delivery system. However, the fact that we are so dependent on them represents a serious structural weakness of the program. The lack of a full-time, specifically trained teaching force, dedicated and trained to meet the needs of adults, undoubtedly contributes to the problems adult learners face in attempting to improve their skills.

For example, in order for adult learners to have a successful educational experience, their most pressing need may be for someone to intervene on their behalf around an issue that has nothing to do with the acquisition of basic skills. They may need community service, assistance with child care or transportation, or corrective medical assistance. They may have a problem which is so compelling to the individual that it makes it impossible for him or her to take full advantage of the adult education program.

Part-time teachers generally do not have the time, energy, interest, or the training to serve as an effective intervener. The bulk of their time, except for the few hours devoted to the adult education class, is spent in teaching in a public or private school or carrying out their primary job. They certainly do not have time to go into the community to seek solutions to the problems of their adult learners.

What's more, most teachers and administrators, with the exception of those trained as community educators, do not know how to access community services on behalf of their students. Most teacher training programs do not instill either the commitment or skills to do so. Schools and the people who run them are insular by nature, inclination, and tradition. Schools are thought of as self contained institutions where people, (i.e. *little* people) come to receive what its managers and operators have to impart. The managers and operators know what's best for the learner, are committed to the environment in which learning (or at least *teaching*) takes place, and see no reason to move outside that environment. Therefore, the notion that an adult learner's needs might be better served by another agency in a different environment, and that they should facilitate that arrangement, simply never occurs to them. Nor should we expect it to, given the type of training most teachers and administrators have received.

Half or Less Complete Their Objectives

Another feature of the current federal adult education legislation is the lack of accountability built into the law. Impressive numbers of adults have improved their basic skills, gotten off public assistance programs, found jobs, and been aided by enrolling in an adult basic education, adult secondary, or ESL program. However, estimates of the dropout rate range from a low of 30 percent to a high of 70 percent. Respected analysts and observers of adult literacy programs observe that 50 percent or more of the participants drop out without completing their stated objectives. Hunter and Harman in Adult Illiteracy in the United

States state that "about one-third of those who enroll in ABE do not complete their courses." 2/

Like much of the data available for this program, data on completions is at best spotty and at worst, misleading. The majority of the analysts agree that the range is closer to 30 to 50 percent. These figures are at least partially born out by a U.S. Department of Education report which states that in 1986, of the 844,000 participants who left the program, 444,000 or 52.6 percent left before completing the program objectives. Whatever the true number, the dropout rate in this program is inexcusably high.

There are of course a number of logical reasons given for this high dropout rate, and at one level at least, they are accurate and may even be acceptable. The reasons purported to have been given by the 444,000 leavers during 1986 were health problems (6.5%), day care problems (5.7%), transportation problems (5.6%), family problems (3.9%), location of class (1.2%), lack of interest (5.6%), time class is scheduled (3.1%), changed address (13%), and other reasons (55.4%).

With the possible exception of the "Lack of Interest" category, the first eight reasons are logical concerns of adult learners and should be accommodated by the program. It stands to reason that many adult learners will find lack of day care an insurmountable problem. The administrators of a 25 year old program should have recognized and systematically assisted the learner in solving that problem. Obviously some local programs have done so--local administrators are frequently very creative. The overriding problem is not one of insensitivity by local program administrators. The problem is that the federal program

does not provide resources to allow such problems to be systematically addressed.

The more disturbing number is the 55 percent of the program leavers who fall into the "other" category. It appears that state and federal administrators of federal Adult Education Act programs have no real notion why over half of the participants left the program. It would seem logical to assume, therefore, that they also have little evidence of the accomplishments of those leavers before they "disappeared" from the program.

Even though completion rates have been historically low, no state has ever had its federal funds reduced because of high dropouts, few if any state or local adult educators have lost their jobs because of high attrition rates, and volunteers continue to be assigned to adults in need of instruction, irrespective of past performance or failure rates. The only one who seems to be blamed for poor performance are the adults who have come in search of help. The standard reaction seems to be that <u>they</u> left the program of their own free will--not that they left the program because <u>we</u> didn't meet their needs.

Because of demographic work force and workplace changes, it is both possible and probable that the plight of the illiterate adult will truly become a national priority. If such becomes the case, a trained work force will have become too important to the nation's survival to continue to condone the current dropout rate. The lack of accountability is a weakness in the current program which we have tolerated for too long and which will undoubtedly not be tolerated in the future. Adult educators, like their colleagues in elementary and secondary

education, should be prepared to accept new and unfamiliar levels of accountability.

An Inordinate Use of Volunteers

In any federal program, one can describe some strengths as weaknesses, and conversely, some weaknesses as strengths. As has already been demonstrated, the Adult Education program is no exception. One such weakness/strength relates to the historical use of volunteers to provide literacy training to millions of adults.

In 1986 the federal government reported that in the federally supported Adult Education Program there were 36,866 volunteers in the program representing about 25 percent of all instructors.

The volunteer can be characterized as a dedicated, interested, concerned individual who has the time and energy to assist members of their community in learning to read. The volunteer is helping to empower fellow citizens to be fully functioning members of their community. Unfortunately, the volunteer is frequently poorly trained, receives minimal guidance and support, knows little about how adults learn, does not understand or use technology, and is not held accountable for poor results; truly a weakness/strength dilemma. 3/

The use of volunteers makes the scarce dollar go farther and allows additional adults to enter the program. Volunteers are viewed by many program administrators as the lesser of two evils. What is at issue then is not that program administrators use so many volunteers. It is the fact that they have been forced by federal and state policies and financial commitment to do so if they are going to even make a dent in

the pool of adults in need of service. It is clear that the adult teaching force needs to be professionalized, and full time adult instructors must become the rule rather than the exception. Volunteers should continue to be used as secondary, not primary, service providers. They must become support staff to full time teachers, not replacements for them.

Inadequate Support Systems

Teachers and administrators need support. They need to improve their skills by applying the results of the latest research to their own program. They need inservice programs devoted to improved practices. They need respected colleagues who analyze and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their discipline. They need to understand evaluation techniques for themselves and their students. They need to understand how students learn and how different students learn differently. They need to have easy access to the results of research and evaluation studies, and they need someone to collect, organize, and disseminate the materials. They need a group of people who are constantly developing improved curricular materials and a structure whereby the application of technology to the teaching and learning of adults is promoted, researched, developed, tested, evaluated, and disseminated. In short, they need a *support system*. More importantly, since such a support system enhances the quality of instruction, learners are equally in need of such a support system.

To be effective, that system must be structured and formalized--not episodic and haphazard. Unfortunately, because of the provisions of the

federal legislation governing adult literacy programs, the field of adult education has no support system. Bits and pieces exist here and there which struggle for survival. There is not now, nor has there ever been, a support system for adult education.

With no federally supported research program, there is no way to determine where knowledge gaps exist nationally in reading, writing, computation, oral communication, and the development of critical thinking skills. Even if the gaps could be identified, there is no structure for systematically addressing those gaps. What is needed is a method of establishing a research agenda for adult basic education.

As in the area of basic and applied research, no structure exists to develop an agenda devoted to the development, adaptation, field testing, refinement, and dissemination of appropriate assessment and measurement instruments. Such an agenda would parallel, support, and enhance the research agenda.

Finally, just as there are few teacher training programs devoted exclusively to the preservice preparation for teachers of adults, there has been little research on the most effective techniques for teaching adults, the most appropriate teaching methods for varying teaching and learning conditions, and the most effective ways to train teachers in the use of technology. Here, too, there is a need for a supported research agenda--an agenda which can assist the full-time adult teacher to be more effective, an agenda which helps the part-time teacher understand the unique needs of adults and their responses to different teaching and learning environments, and an agenda which, if we are going

to use them appropriately and effectively, begins to better integrate volunteers into the overall system.

Too much time has passed, and too many adults have received inappropriate services because too many teachers have been attempting to serve the needs of the illiterate adult without the benefit of scholarly research and enlightened demonstrations. Everyone involved--learner, teacher, and administrator--are the losers. Therefore, we believe a focused and appropriately funded support system for the adult basic education program is essential.

OTHER FEDERAL ADULT LITERACY PROGRAMS

To this point, the discussion has centered around the Adult Education Act as the federal government's major initiative for adult literacy. Congress has enacted other legislation however, which, while not devoted specifically and exclusively to the enhancement of adult literacy, has nonetheless authorized the expenditure of federal funds on attempts to eliminate illiteracy in some adults. These programs have frequently focused on adults who possess a specific characteristic or who fall into a specific target group.

They have been assigned to different agencies and typically require little if any coordination with other programs serving the educational needs of adults. These efforts are usually inconsistent in purpose, utilize different definitions of adult, recognize different age groups, limit the funds to specific target populations, authorize different purposes for which funds may be spent, and do not have uniform data gathering or accountability measures. They represent a fragmented group

of mismatched programs, which nonetheless, taken together, define this country's policy on adult literacy.

Agreement on how much federal money is actually spent on adult literacy is, therefore, difficult to obtain. For example, in May of 1986, The Washington Consulting Group, Inc., under contract from the Federal Interagency Committee on Education (FICE) issued a report entitled "Literacy Management Information Project." This report represented a government-wide inventory of federal adult literacy or literacy-related programs. According to this inventory, there were 79 different federal programs in 1985 housed in 14 different federal agencies which support literacy activities.

The WCG study reported that, during 1985, federal expenditures for literacy activities in what were judged to be *primary* programs, totaled $84,365,018. Less direct *Secondary* program expenditures for literacy activities totaled $255,087,975, and a third level of *indirect* programs accounted for $8,109,163. 4/ According to this report, total expenditures for federal adult literacy activities for 1985 from all three levels were $347,562,156. However, the 1985 compilation does not include expenditure data for 47, or 58 percent, of the 79 programs, including the JTPA program administered by the Department of Labor.

With the knowledge that the figures reported include less than half the programs identified, a working hypothesis might be that they may account for less than half the federal funds spent on adult literacy. If one disregards the unreported program expenditures, the federal expenditure still balloons to over three and one half times the amount

reported under the Adult Education Act. If the 47 unreported programs would double the reported expenditure, since they represent more than half of the programs included in the study, then the federal commitment to adult literacy would appear to be as much as six times more than has been described thus far in this paper.

Apparently some members of Congress and their staff were fearful that too many people would determine that critics of the federal effort in adult literacy were once again "crying wolf," and the growing support for a greater federal role in adult literacy would be damaged. Consequently, 11 months after the WCG report was published, the staff of the U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary, and Vocational Education issued a staff report entitled "An Assessment of the Federal Initiative in the Area of Adult Literacy." This report refuted many of the findings of the earlier FICE supported study. The Congressional study was undertaken because there was concern that:

> "There has been gross misinformation on the Federal efforts to combat the problem of adult illiteracy in this country. At a time when government, the private sector, academia, and individuals are united in wanting to address the problem, it is a disservice to promote misinformation and misunderstanding." 5/

The Congressional staff study contends that the amount of federal funds actually spent in 1985 to address adult illiteracy totaled $126.5 million in contrast to the $347.6 million reported by WCG. In addition, the Congressional study found that only ten programs in five agencies are definitely conducting literacy activities and providing services for illiterate adults. The authors of this study report that these ten programs account for $99.9 million or 79 percent of the $126.5 million they identified, and Adult Education Act programs accounted for 81

percent of the $99.9 million and 64 percent of the total federal expenditure for adult literacy.

These two studies bring several points into sharp perspective. First, no one really knows how much is being spent by the federal government on adult literacy. Second, several programs administered by a number of agencies exist and are currently being funded. Third, there is little coordination between these programs, and no mechanism exists for ensuring coordination. Fourth, over the years Congress has judged literacy to be a problem for different target groups and has authorized funds to address each problem. Fifth, although fragmented and uncoordinated, the vague outlines of a federal policy on adult literacy--unstated, informal and haphazard as it might be--seems to be emerging. And, finally, members of Congress and their staff are aware of the problems illiterate adults present to the country and are willing to consider additional funds and interventions on behalf of the adult population.

Before considering how to address the existing fragmentation and develop a cohesive federal policy for adult literacy, we need to have a better understanding of the existing federal initiatives. A summary of the existing programs, by agency, excluding the Adult Education Act of 1966 as amended, follows. In order to take advantage of what little consensus does exist, only those federal programs which were confirmed by both the WCG and the Congressional staff study as providing funds and services for adult literacy, plus several new initiatives authorized by Congress since those studies were published, are included in this summary.

Department of Education

The Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act

In 1984 Congress amended the Vocational Education Act of 1963, and renamed it the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act. The provision of services to adults has been an allowable part of the vocational education program from the beginning. However, like their brethren in general education, many vocational educators are youth-, not adult-, oriented. Consequently, Congress has consistently tried to overcome this bias by mandating that a minimum amount of federal vocational education funds must be spent on programs for adults. In the Carl Perkins Act, Congress set aside 12 percent of the funds available under the State Grant portion of the Act "for adults who are in need of training and retraining." In addition, Congress has also set aside 8.5 percent of the state grant funds "for individuals who are single parents and homemakers," and further stipulated that vocational educators may "reimburse or pay for vocational education and training activities, *including basic literacy instruction* and necessary educational materials, that will furnish single parents and homemakers with marketable skills." 6/ Taken together, these two set-aside programs represent a total appropriation of $158 million, almost $22 million more than was appropriated for the total state grant program under the Adult Education Act for 1989.

Adult literacy services are also provided under the Special Programs section of the Carl Perkins Act. Under Title III, Part A, "prevocational educational preparation and basic skills development" for young people 21 to 24 years of age can be provided in cooperation with

business concerns through programs jointly operated with community-based organizations. In addition, Title III, Part B, Consumer and Homemaker Education, authorizes federal funds to support the "application of academic skills (such as reading, writing, mathematics, and science) through consumer and homemaking education programs." 7/ Finally, "remedial services" are authorized under Title III, Part C, Adult Training, Retraining and Employment Development. Part C has never been funded on the assertion by the elementary and secondary educators who administer the federal Vocational Education program, that such services are also authorized under the State Grant portion of the legislation. Although some literacy services are provided, and obviously some contextual basic skills are imparted, specific services for additional adults under this Act remain a hollow promise. Simply another example of how the needs of adults continually go unaddressed in an agency devoted to providing educational services to children and youth.

The Congressional staff responsible for the study described earlier questioned several state directors of vocational education and the federal director to determine the level of funding for adult basic education during 1985 under the State Plan portion of the Carl Perkins Act. They found that no solid data exists and in many states it is impossible to determine how much federal vocational education money is being spent for adult literacy instruction. By one estimate, it probably would not exceed $3 million.

In summary, although adult literacy programs are authorized in the Carl Perkins Vocational Education Act, such authorization is limited, and it would appear that actual programs are limited even further.

Indian Education Act of 1988

Subpart 3 contains a section entitled "Improvement of Educational Opportunities for Adult Indians" which provides for "basic literacy opportunities for all illiterate Indian adults" and "opportunities to all Indian adults to qualify for a high school equivalency certificate in the shortest period of time feasible." 8/ In addition, this law provides support services for illiterate adult Indians which would be the envy of general adult educators. For example, it states that the Secretary of the Department of Education will support a major research and development program to develop innovative and effective techniques for achieving the stated literacy and high school goals and, through surveys and evaluations, to define the extent of illiteracy and lack of high school completion among Indians.

Adult literacy is clearly a major priority of this legislation. Sadly, there is no reference to coordination between this program and the Adult Education Act, even though both programs are housed in the same agency. The Congressional staff survey found that of a total of $2.94 million appropriated under this act, 1.176 million was spent on literacy activities for adult Indians in 1985. Program staff further report that, for the last three years, the total appropriation for this part of the Indian Education Act has been devoted to literacy projects. Consequently, federal funds for literacy activities for adult Indians totaled $2.797 million in 1986, and $3.0 million for 1987 and 1988. Congress appropriated $4 million for FY 1989.

Higher Education Act of 1965 as Amended

Title IV, Work Study Program

Beginning in 1985, a portion of unspent and recaptured funds from the previous fiscal year were authorized to be reallocated to, among other purposes, special adult literacy programs in institutions of higher education. Both surveys reported that $650,000 was reallocated during 1985. In the spring of 1988, approximately $7.0 million of the original appropriation of $591 million was recaptured and reallocated. Of the $7.0 million, $800,000 was reallocated for adult literacy projects. The latest amendments to the Higher Education Act eliminates this reallocation authority but stipulates that 25% of funds recaptured in the future must go to the Community Service-Learning program. These funds can be used to improve the quality of life of low income community residents by providing them with a series of services including "literacy training." Although reallocated Work Study funds will be available for literacy training in the future, because of this congressional change, the actual amount will be much more difficult to identify.

Title X, Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE)

With a 1989 appropriation of $11,856,000, this program is authorized to fund small discretionary grants which promote literacy. During 1985 the program funded grants totaling $210,118. Since the purpose of FIPSE is to make recommendations for the improvement of postsecondary education and for the evaluation, dissemination, and adaptation of demonstrated improvements in postsecondary educational practices, it can

serve as a source of research and demonstration funds for adult literacy activities. Unfortunately, since there is no requirement to coordinate these efforts with the National Program funds now available under the Adult Education Act, the potential contribution to the support services needed in adult literacy are minimized.

Library Services and Construction Act of 1984

The findings of Title I stipulates that "the role of libraries has expanded to include ... (B) providing literacy training for illiterate and functionally illiterate adults ..." In addition, the act authorizes grants to states for, among other things, "(4) for assisting libraries in providing literacy programs for adults and school dropouts in cooperation with other agencies and organizations, if appropriate." 9/ Federal program administrators have estimated that of the $81 million allocated under Title I of this act, an additional $5 million was spent for adult literacy activities at the state level during FY 1988.

Title VI, the Library Literacy Programs of LSCA authorizes grants to state and public libraries for supporting literacy programs. Authorized at a level of $5 million for fiscal years 1985-1988, with a grant limitation of $25,000 to any library, these funds may be used for training of illiterate adults, training of librarians and volunteers in the use of appropriate materials for illiterate adults, or training librarians and volunteers to teach illiterate adults. The congressional survey found that $4,736,643 was spent for these purposes during 1985.

Augustus F. Hawkins-Robert T. Stafford Elementary and Secondary School Improvement Amendments of 1988

Title I, Chapter 2, Part B, National Diffusion Network

This small discretionary program provides $50,000 to disseminate the results of exemplary educational programs. Exemplary adult literacy activities are also eligible for dissemination. Both the WCG and Congressional staff studies report that during 1985 NDN funded three exemplary adult literacy projects totaling $150,000.

Education For All Handicapped Students Act

The National Institute of Handicapped Research

This targeted program is part of the Education for the Handicapped Act and can be said to, indirectly at best, provide some funds to aid illiterate adults. The program develops communication devices for the severely handicapped and conducts some clinical research. Some of its clients are members of the adult illiteracy pool. The program managers estimated that about $400,000 of their total appropriation of $39,250,000 was spent in projects to support illiterate adults in 1985.

Department of Health and Human Services

Social Security Act

Title IV, Part C, The Work Incentive Program

Congress has stipulated that certain participants in the Aid to Families With Dependent Children (AFDC) program may be enrolled in a work incentive program which, where practicable and necessary, may include "program orientation, *basic education* training in communications and employability skills, work experience, institutional

training, on-the-job training etc., etc." 10/ Both the WCG study and the Congressional staff study reported that although adult literacy services were possible under this program, it was impossible to determine either the extent of adult participation in basic skills instruction or the amount of money being spent. Suffice it to say, that under certain conditions, this program should be recognized as occasionally contributing to the federal adult literacy initiative.

Community Services Block Grant Act

A second program within Health and Human Services was also judged by the Congressional study to possibly be conducting some activities for the adult illiterate population. Although the degree of participation and the amount of funds expended could not be determined for 1985, the program is designed to make grants to states "to provide a range of services and activities having a measurable and potentially major impact on causes of poverty in the community or those areas of the community where poverty is a particularly acute problem." 11/ Among other activities, this law authorizes funds to assist participants in attaining an adequate education.

Although basic skills are not specifically mentioned, it is clear, given the target group, that at least some of the funds would be used for that purpose. This act was last amended in 1986 with authorization levels set for $390 million for 1987, $409.5 million for 1988, $430 million for 1989, and $451 million for 1990. It is clear that this is another targeted federal program which authorizes adult literacy as a means to a broader end.

Department of Defense

The surveys found that each of the four branches of the military operate adult literacy programs for members of their service whose basic skills are inadequate to carry out their military responsibilities appropriately. In 1985, the four branches of the military spent a total of $17 million on adult literacy instruction. The expenditures by the separate branches were: $1.5 million by the Air Force, $12.1 million by the Army, $0.9 million by the Marine Corps, and $2.5 million by the Navy.

If skill levels of these young adults has been increased sufficiently to elevate them out of the target pool of illiterate adults, the military services have accomplished two tasks. First, they have improved the operation of their own branch. Second, when these young people are discharged, they will no longer be a part of the adult illiteracy problem. However, the majority of the enlistees into the all volunteer force are high school graduates, and consequently, they do not meet the definition of adult illiterates and were probably not members of the target population in the first place. To that extent, the military programs probably should not be included in the list of federally supported adult illiteracy programs.

Department of Transportation

The U.S. Coast Guard conducts a similar program to those offered by the four branches of the armed services. Entitled the Basic Education Enrichment Program, the Coast Guard spent $167,000 during 1985 addressing adult illiteracy.

Department of Justice

Like the military, federal prisons provide basic skill instructions to a certain percentage of their current population. The Bureau of Prisons requires that any federal prison inmate who does not test at least at a six grade academic level must attend an Adult Basic Education Program for at least 90 days. Although the amount of its total budget spent on adult literacy activities is unavailable, at any one time about 30 percent of the federal prison population of over 35,000 are enrolled in Adult Basic Education programs. These individuals would be members of the Adult Education target population if they were not incarcerated. According to the Education Office of the Federal Bureau of Prisons, they have an education budget of $25 million of which four to five million dollars is spent for basic skills programs.

Consequently, the service provided by these programs, leaving quality of instruction and grade level gain of the learner aside, represents a direct supplement to regular adult literacy programs and helps to reduce the target population. To that extent, this program is another example of a specifically targeted federal adult literacy initiative conducted by another agency with no coordination to other literacy initiatives. On the one hand, a valuable supplement; on the other, another contributor to the fragmentation of the federal involvement in adult literacy.

In 1985 the National Institute of Corrections, under its Technical Assistance Program, awarded $1,581,975 to a variety of agencies to train correctional educators to develop and implement literacy programs in

prisons as well as how to acquire materials and how to develop and implement computer assisted instructional programs. This narrowly targeted program contributed only indirectly to the training and technical assistance needs of the majority of adult literacy service providers.

Department of Labor

Job Training Partnership Act

Various Titles of the Job Training Partnership Act administered by the Department of Labor authorize adult literacy programs. Unlike the Adult Education Act, JTPA adult literacy instruction is a means to a specific end. Youth and unskilled adults are enrolled in JTPA programs to be prepared specifically for entry into the labor force and to obtain productive employment.

If additional basic skills are necessary for the individual to accomplish that objective, the program is authorized to provide those skills. In fact, the law stipulates that, "the basic measure of performance for adult training programs under Title II is the increase in employment and earnings and the reductions in welfare dependency resulting from participation in the program." 12/ Having established these parameters, the law authorizes funds to be used for, among 28 different purposes, remedial education and basic skills training, literacy training, and bilingual training. Both the WCG and Congressional staff studies reported that the exact amount of funds spent on adult literacy and the number of individuals receiving instruction were impossible to determine. Later contacts with DoL officials revealed that they estimate basic and general education

services constituted approximately 9.3 percent of the total Title IIA and 6.4 percent of Title III for 1985. This would translate into $166 and $18 million of the FY 1989 appropriation.

Miscellaneous

The two surveys found *one time only* programs in a number of federal agencies that, directly, or more often than not indirectly, addressed adult illiteracy. Some of these were implemented during the base year of 1985, others had been implemented earlier and not repeated, and yet others, such as the $2 million set aside in the 1987 budget of the Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) to establish a volunteer literacy corps, had not occurred yet.

However, the Congressional staff survey did discover that VISTA spent $22 million on literacy programs throughout the agency with about $18 million of that going for stipends for volunteers and $4 million on "project costs" in 1985. Since volunteers play a central role in the provision of adult literacy services, and since training, or the lack of it, is a critical element in the quality of adult illiteracy instruction, this $22 million VISTA expenditure must definitely be considered as a part of the total federal investment in adult literacy. By including the amount spent for these one time only projects, one can account for the $126.5 million in federal adult illiteracy initiatives reported in the Congressional staff study for 1985. In 1988 appropriations hearings, VISTA officials stated that 33 percent, or 929 volunteers, and 22 percent, or 624 volunteers, for the job placement/ unemployed programs are provided for literacy programs. Consequently,

one can hypothesize that about 55 percent of VISTA dollars could be devoted to literacy. That would represent an expenditure of $13.4 million for 1989.

PROGRAMS AUTHORIZED SINCE 1985

The recognition by national policymakers of our national economic dependency on a skilled and literate labor force has led Congress to add new occupational and basic skills training programs, usually targeted at a specific population group, to existing legislation. Those portions of the new programs which focus on basic skills, coupled with the old programs described previously, constitute the current federal contribution and role in adult literacy in 1989.

U.S. Department of Education

Adult Education Act

Part C. Workplace Literacy and English Literacy Grants

These are two new targeted programs that did not exist when the Washington Consulting Group and the Congressional staff surveyed the federal literacy programs. First authorized in 1987 and funded in 1988, these two programs carry a combined authorized funding level of $30 million for 1988, $31.5 million for 1989, and such sums as may be necessary for 1990 to 1993. Actual appropriations for the two programs were $9.57 million (1988) and $11.86 million (1989) for Workplace Partnerships Literacy projects and zero funds for 1988 and $4.94 million for 1989 for the English Literacy Grants program. Since Congress appropriated $16.8 million, or just over 53 percent of the authorized

amount, it would appear that they will remain a federal discretionary program for some time to come.

These programs constitute new targeted federal initiatives in adult literacy. Section 371, titled Business, Industry, Labor and Education Partnerships for Workplace Literacy, provides funds to pay 70 percent of the cost of "adult education programs which teach literacy skills needed in the workplace through partnerships" 13/ between business, industry, labor, Private Industry Councils under JTPA and state or local education secondary and postsecondary agencies or institutions.

The second program, English Literacy Grants, appear to be a recognition by Congress that the ESL program is currently absorbing huge amounts of the federal funds available under the Adult Education Act. This program authorizes grants to states for the operation and improvement of English literacy programs for individuals of limited English proficiency. In addition, it authorizes the Secretary of Education to "develop innovative approaches and methods of literacy education for individuals of limited English proficiency utilizing new instructional methods and technologies" 14/ and establishes a national clearinghouse on literacy education for individuals with limited English proficiency.

Adult Education for the Homeless Act

In 1986, in recognition of the fact that the existing adult basic education legislation might not authorize services to the homeless, Congress ensured that homeless individuals would be eligible for services under the Adult Education Act, and for targeted additional

funds to this special population as well. As a subtitle of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, Congress amended the Adult Education Act by adding a provision entitled Adult Education for the Homeless and authorized $7.5 million for 1987 and $10 million for 1988. This amendment provided grants to states to "plan and implement a program of literacy training and basic skills remediation for adult homeless individuals within the state ....." 15/ In this case, Congress also required coordination with other state and local adult literacy service providers. In this case, Congress actually put its money where its mouth is and appropriated $6.9 for 1987, $7.18 million in 1988, and $7.09 for 1989, even though the administration did not request funding in the 1989 budget.

Augustus F. Hawkins-Robert T. Stafford Elementary and Secondary School Improvement Amendments of 1988

Chapter 1, Part B, Even Start Programs Operated by Local Education Agencies

This program, authorized at $50 million for 1989, and "such sums as may be necessary for 1990 through 1993, is an intergenerational early childhood/adult education program for parents who are eligible for training under the Adult Education Act and their one to seven year old children. Among other things, these family centered educational programs are authorized to develop "instructional programs that provide adult literacy, training parents to support the educational growth of their children, and preparation of children for success in regular school programs." 16/ Congress appropriated $14.82 million for 1989 for

this special target group. Although it is impossible to determine what proportion of these funds will actually be used for adult literacy, given the target population, it would appear that a significant portion will be. Other services, important to adult learners, such as transportation and child care are also authorized. This program can be considered a significant supplement, in intent if not in appropriated funds, to the federal adult education initiative.

Higher Education Act of 1965 as Amended

Title I, Part A, Postsecondary Programs for Nontraditional Students

This title contains two programs which are definitely supportive of adult literacy initiatives. The first, the Institutional Development program is to improve the capacity of institutions of higher education to respond to the needs of functionally illiterate adults. Included in the nine types of activities for which funds are authorized, many of which might serve poorly skilled adults, is one specific activity which would lead to "the creation or expansion of education programs and curriculum, *including adult literacy efforts*, designed to meet the present and future needs of the labor market." 17/

The second program authorized under this title is Adult and Continuing Education Staff Development. Its purpose is to assist institutions of higher education in providing in-service training to individuals involved in providing adult and continuing education services. Among other things, grants may be made which provide "technical assistance to programs of adult education, with particular

emphasis on federally funded programs." In addition, the funds may also be used to provide for the "development of adult and continuing educational curricula materials, including adult literacy curricula, that may be used in adult and continuing education staff development training, especially materials that focus on utilization of new technologies." 18/

Both of these programs are designed to provide the kind of staff training activities which were transferred from the federal Adult Education Act to the states in the 1974 amendments. Although these programs are housed in the same agency in the Department of Education, no coordination with federal Adult Education program administrators is required. These programs were not included in the Congressional survey conducted in April of 1987.

Department of Health and Human Services

Family Support Act of 1988

Title II. Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training Program

This program, which is administered by the Department of Health and Human Services, allows families with needy children to obtain education, training, and employment that will help them avoid long-term welfare dependence. Among the eleven authorized services are basic education and skills training, remedial education to achieve a basic literacy level, and instruction in English as a second language. Unlike many other federal literacy programs, this one requires coordination at the state level with state JTPA, Adult Education, and Carl Perkins Vocational Education programs to promote coordinated planning and delivery

of services. The total funds authorized for this program, some portion of which will be spent for adult literacy instruction, is $600 million for 1989, $800 million for 1990, $1 billion for 1991, 1992, and 1993, $1.1 billion for 1994, $1.3 billion for 1995, and $1 billion in 1996 and thereafter.

In comparison to other literacy related programs, this authorization level is very significant. Consequently, this new program may ultimately add significant resources to the total federal adult literacy program. Once again, Congress is directing funds to a specific target group. This seems to be an increasingly obvious Congressional trend in adult literacy over the last few years.

Department of Labor

Job Training for the Homeless

While amending the Adult Education Act by adding the Adult Education for the Homeless section, discussed previously, in an apparent disregard for duplication, Congress also authorized, then subsequently reauthorized, a $12 million Job Training for the Homeless demonstration program in the Department of Labor. Among other things, the funds could be used for basic skills instruction, remedial education activities, and basic literacy instruction.

Title V, Jobs for Employable Dependent Individuals Incentive Bonus Program (JEDI)

During the passage of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Amendments Act of 1988, Congress amended the Job Training Partnership Act by adding this new title which further targets funds at Aid For

Dependent Children or Supplemental Security Income recipients and recipients of refugee aid under the Immigration and Nationality Act. This program assists eligible recipients, through education, training and the acquisition of job skills to become independent.

States are given incentive payments for the long-term placement of appropriate individuals. Of the three educational qualifications which meet eligibility requirements, the one appropriate to adult literacy is the provision that an individual no longer receives welfare assistance and "obtains the equivalent of a secondary school diploma within 12 months following the individual's determination of eligibility for programs offered under this title." 19/ This provision equates to the adult secondary provision of the Adult Education Act which authorizes the expenditure of federal funds for high school equivalency programs.

Although "such sums" have been authorized for this program, it is too soon to tell how much federal money will actually be spent for this program, and further, how much of that will be for adult literacy activities.

Department of Agriculture

Food Stamp Act of 1977 as Amended

Title IV, Family Self-Sufficiency

Public Law 100-435 amended the Food Stamp Act by requiring states to provide an employment training program for all eligible food stamp recipients. Congress appropriates funds for the total food stamp program and the staff of the Department of Agriculture determine how these funds are to be divided among functions. Out of the 1989 appropriation of $13.6 billion, $75 million, which is equal to the

legislative cap, has been set aside for the employment and training program. This amendment also added to the employment and training program a section which authorizes "education programs or activities to improve basic skills or otherwise improve employability, including educational programs determined by the State agency to expand the job search abilities or employability of those subject to the program under this paragraph." 20/ It is impossible to tell how much of the $75 million will be spent on basic skills as authorized under the newly added section. It is fair to say that this section will undoubtedly add an important new source of funds for a specific target group requiring additional literacy skills instruction.

THE FEDERAL ADULT INITIATIVE IN SUMMARY

It is instructive to know who was served, by how many agencies, through how many programs, for how much money, during 1985. For an analysis of the federal involvement in adult literacy, it would be more instructive if we knew the answers for 1989. Unfortunately, absent a new survey commissioned by FICE or a Congressional committee, it will be necessary to estimate the current level of federal funding devoted to reducing adult illiteracy.

On the assumption that a new survey would find onetime projects in 1989 at least equal to those operated in 1985, it is appropriate to use the 1985 figure of $126.5 as a base figure from which to estimate the current federal appropriation for adult literacy programs. To that base figure, in order to arrive at a reasonable estimate of federal expenditures, one should add:

- $54,774,000 which represents the increase in the Adult Education Act state grant appropriation between 1985 and 1989;
- $34,866,000 for National Programs, Literacy Training for Homeless Adults, Workplace Literacy Partnerships, and English Literacy Grants, all of which have been added to the Adult Education Act since 1985; and
- $2,250,000 which represents a estimated modest five percent increase in all adult literacy program expenditures reported above for the period 1985 to 1988. Since actual program growth in the Adult Education Act program is shown above, those funds are not included in the five percent growth estimate.

These programs, for which the total appropriation will be spent on adult literacy, total $91.98 million. This, added to the base of $126.5, means we can assume that, <u>at a minimum</u> the 1989 federal expenditure for adult literacy will be approximately $218.4 million, or a federal expenditure growth of approximately 73 percent since 1985--a significant accomplishment. This does not include any estimate of the expenditure for 1989 for adult literacy instruction under all the programs listed above, such as the Job Opportunity and Basic Skills Training program authorized as Title II of the Family Support Act of 1988. With an authorization of $600 million for 1989, the amount spent for adult literacy could be very significant. Nor is any estimate included for the various Titles of the Job Training Partnership Act, even though it is clear that significant numbers of JTPA clients are receiving basic skills instruction as a part of their training. Finally, it does not include estimates of the amount spent for those programs authorized since 1985. Since neither the Washington Consulting Group in its 1986 report or the 1987 Congressional reevaluation of the WCG survey gave even an estimate of the amount of JTPA funds spent on

adult literacy, never mind the other programs discussed earlier, it is probably foolhardy to do so here. In summary, we can say with a fair degree of assurance that in excess of $218.4 million will be spent by the federal government during 1989 to provide basic skills instruction to adults. What we cannot say with any assurance is how much in excess of that amount will be spent.

Foolhardy or not, one is tempted to obtain a sense, if not an estimate, of the total amount of federal funds which might be used for adult literacy purposes for 1989. If one totals such programs as the vocational education set asides, Community Service Block Grants, JTPA, Even Start, and the other federal adult literacy authorities in all the agencies, their total appropriation would exceed $7.0 billion. If five percent of that could be stipulated as being dedicated to adult literacy activities, an additional $350 million might well be allocated to adult literacy efforts during 1989.

Given the nature, purpose, and target groups of those programs, an average of five percent for adult literacy does not seem to be an outlandishly large figure. However, it does raise the federal investment from $218.4 million to about $568 million; a not insignificant investment. The fact is, we just don't know how much it is and there is currently no way to determine what the correct figure should be. This is obviously a weakness badly in need of correction.

This litany of various federal laws which either stipulate or permit the provision of basic education skills to adults suggests that over the years, Congress has attempted to address the problem in a variety of ways. Most generally, however, not by adding more money or

responsibility to the Adult Education Act and/or those charged with its implementation.

A Haphazard Federal Policy

There are several explanations regarding why funds were not added to the Adult Education Act to meet the needs of a new target group rather than the authorization to provide basic skills in different laws administered by different agencies. First, many members of Congress felt that the performance level of the existing federal Adult Education program was not high enough to meet the needs of the individuals they were dealing with at the time. Second, they felt that the new target group would not receive sufficient attention under the Adult Education programs. Third, they may have concluded that inadequate funds had been appropriated in the Adult Education Act to deal effectively with the new target group and, therefore, felt it necessary to supplement the basic program with additional funds, even though in another act. Fourth, recognizing the difficulty of coordinating programs in two or more federal agencies, they may have decided, for ease of administration, to confine total responsibility, including adult literacy, to the agency having responsibility for the primary program. Finally, they may have felt that since the provision of adult literacy skills was not the primary objective of the program, it made little or no sense to either the adult learner or the service provider to divide the responsibilities among agencies.

Irrespective of the reasons, the fact remains that over the last several years Congress has appropriated millions of dollars to several

different agencies to provide basic skills to adult Indians, adult homeless, adult immigrants, adults on food stamps, adults on welfare, adults for whom English is a second language, marginally literate adults in the workplace, incarcerated adults, and adults receiving occupational skills training. The fact also remains that 1) these funds were not authorized in the legislation originally enacted to enhance adult literacy; 2) with minor exceptions, these programs do not require coordination and planning among federal, state, or local agencies and service providers; and, 3) taken together, they can be interpreted to reflect a growing federal commitment toward the enhancement of adult literacy in this nation.

Fragmentation and Linkages--Mutually Exclusive Terms

The net effect of Congressional action has been to develop haphazard, highly fragmented and, consequently, poorly coordinated programs to address adult illiteracy. This fragmented approach has led to the lack of coordination and linkages between programs and the agencies that administer them at every level. Admittedly, Congress has been more aggressive in trying to ensure coordination in some programs than in others. For example, the Job Training and Partnership Act makes reference to federal vocational education legislation 18 times and the Carl Perkins Vocational Education Act refers to JTPA 22 times.

Unfortunately, however, Congressional mandates do not always lead to the expected behavior at the state and local level. For example, the Center for Research in Vocational Education at Ohio State University attempted to determine if state vocational education agencies, state

JTPA administrators, and private industry councils were complying with the requirements of the Carl Perkins Act and JTPA. The Center reported that the yes responses from state and local vocational education and JTPA program administrators ranged from a low 65 percent to a high of 96 percent. Legislating cooperation does not guarantee it.

Congress has mandated planning and cooperation in other programs as well. A case in point is the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training Program contained in the Family Security Act of 1988 described above. In that program, Congress did stipulate cooperation and coordination among agencies. As evidenced in the JTPA/Vocational Education example, it remains to be seen whether that required cooperation will actually occur. The lack of cooperation and coordination is an issue at every level, not only between agencies, but among them as well. At the federal level, depending upon which report you believe, in 1986 there were either 79 different programs in 14 agencies or ten programs in five agencies. Based on this analysis, it would appear that by 1989 the numbers will lie somewhere between the two earlier estimates, although closer to the latter than to the former. For example, a 1988 document from the Clearinghouse on Adult Education, Division of Adult Education, U.S. Department of Education describes 38 "programs in the Department which either deal directly with adult education or can provide support for adult education activities." 21/ By contrast, the 1986 Washington Consulting Group study reported 29 programs in the Department of Education while the 1987 Congressional Staff survey recognized only eight programs in the Department.

The Federal Interagency Committee on Education (FICE) commissioned the Washington Consulting Group to determine how many federal programs there were which authorized adult literacy training of some kind. One of the problems the researchers reported was that, even though individuals from each agency were organized to facilitate data collection within each agency, responses were not obtained from 56 percent of the programs surveyed. If an interagency group can't ensure cooperation from federal program operators for a data collection, why would anyone think that those same program administrators would spend time and energy trying to coordinate the implementation of a wide variety of laws in several federal agencies? We shouldn't expect it, and they don't do it.

Consequently, in most communities there is no agency which can refer an adult to a service provider and be assured the adult will receive appropriate treatment or service. Frequently the adult in search of service, who by his or her experience has become nonassertive, nonaggressive, reluctant, at best, a poor reader, and at worst a nonreader, is sent from agency to agency and bureaucrat to bureaucrat without benefit of assistance or appropriate guidance. Had we tried, we could not have designed a more difficult maze for the adult learner to negotiate. What's more, aside from suggestive and unenforceable language in some of the recent federal legislation, there are neither effective incentives nor appropriate requirements for agencies to coordinate their services and develop meaningful linkages. There is not an organizational structure in place at any level which would allow for such linkages to be developed, even if different agencies wanted to

coordinate their programs and activities. Consequently, an environment which actually nurtures disinterest and bureaucratic inaction has always existed. Only rare and truly caring individuals will take the time and trouble, usually without reward or encouragement, to devise workable linkages. One of the major weaknesses of the current federal adult literacy policy is, therefore, the lack of a structured, workable linkage between programs and agencies and the lack of a requirement to establish one.

TOWARD A COHESIVE FEDERAL POLICY

If this nation is going to remain competitive in a globally interdependent world economy through the turn of the century, it must ensure that it has a highly skilled and trained labor force. Given the realities of demographic trends, the only way that goal can be met is to significantly reduce the pool of illiterate, functionally illiterate, or marginally literate adults and significantly reduce the number of adults entering that pool. The responsibility for achieving the second objective lies with the public and private elementary and secondary schools. That issue is not addressed in this paper and we will assume, for planning and discussion purposes, that the education reforms currently underway and the efforts at restructuring the schools will be successful. Our assumption is that the number of adults needing services who enter the pool will be greatly reduced by a more effective public and private school system.

Such an improved system will not reduce the current pool of adults nor effectively deal with those who continue to replenish the pool. The responsibility for that will fall to the federal and state adult literacy

program; a program which cannot accomplish the goal unless it is significantly changed. The needed changes are systemic in nature. They would result in an adult literacy system that is almost totally different in its structure, process, and procedures from the current system. However, systemic changes are difficult if not impossible to accomplish in social institutions. There is built-in resistance from individuals whose perception of themselves and their programs are challenged by massive changes. However, a series of incremental changes over several years, properly planned and implemented, can ultimately result in the equivalent of a systemic change in the system. Even if one could totally change a system overnight, it would be inappropriate and shortsighted to do so if the best of what exists is not retained. What is needed, therefore, is a series of legislative and programmatic changes which correct the weaknesses in the current system while retaining the experience, dedication, and successful programs of the past. This perspective seems to be supported by a recently organized Working Group on Adult Literacy who stated:

> "We propose an enhanced system of literacy services to provide literacy skills to all Americans in need. This system cannot be developed overnight. A series of investments will have to be made by all parties--including federal, state, and local governments as well as the private and nonprofit sectors--so that we can address the adult literacy issue to meet the nation's needs."

They go on to list the characteristics that such a system should possess. They include:

- Easy *access* to services;
- *Choice* of service providers and methods of instruction;
- *Accountability* of service providers, learner, and funder;

- Instruction should be of high *quality*--measured by an adult learning the most in the shortest period of time from a well trained instructor;
- *Support of learners*, such as child care and transportation, should be accessible and affordable to the learner; and
- *Linkages* to other services should be assured. 22/

The point is that an adult literacy system must be developed which provides the services to adult learners that are currently unavailable or only minimally available, and such a system cannot be accomplished immediately.

A Revised Federal Organizational Structure

For all the reasons described in this paper, the existing organizational structure within the Department of Education is inappropriate and inadequate to effectively carry out the existing task. Therefore, it most certainly cannot be expected to carry out a greatly expanded task. Several organizational options for addressing existing organizational and structural weaknesses are possible.

Option One: Consolidate Existing Programs into an Existing Federal Agency

One logical approach would be to put all programs which authorize adult literacy instruction under a single agency. Therefore, under this option, all adult literacy programs described in the 1987 Congressional staff study, as well as those programs enacted since 1987, would be transferred from their current agency to a single department. This option could also address the fact that the principal federal adult basic education legislation is administered by agencies at the federal

and state level which are dedicated to the education of children and youth, and whose leaders are neither intellectually or emotionally committed to adult learners.

The problems of illiterate adults could be dealt with more aggressively if the programs were administered by agencies and organizations whose mandate is to provide training for adults. Of the agencies currently administering programs which authorize adult basic education as a secondary objective, the Department of Labor would appear the most logical agency to administer the programs. The issue of fragmentation and lack of coordination which exists under current legislation would also be eliminated under this option. Since most of the targeted training programs currently housed in other agencies authorize the provision of occupational skills training as well as basic skills, those programs are very compatible with the training authorized under the Job Training and Partnership Act. As a matter of fact, those programs, with the exception of the Adult Education Act, differ more in the target audience served than they do in the type of training authorized. The needed research could be undertaken by the existing DoL research and development program, along with the necessary demonstration and dissemination functions.

Under such an option, at the state level the governor should be authorized to transfer the same programs to an agency of his or her choice. If the governor chose to leave the programs fragmented as they are now, an arrangement which assured coordination of planning and program operation would be required in order for the state to continue to receive federal adult education and basic skills funds.

The obvious advantage to this option is the fact that DoL, and the agencies who administer DoL programs at the state level, are committed to providing additional skills to *adults* to make them more economically self-sufficient and, as a result, provide the labor market with a more highly skilled labor force. Their traditional client group is disadvantaged adults, not children and youth.

The obvious disadvantage of this option are the turf battles which would result from such a move. Of the five or six agencies affected by this option, it is likely that only Department of Labor administrators would think it is a good idea--and there is even a serious question about them. For that reason, although it is a logical solution to most of the existing structural problems and could be almost completely accomplished by simply amending existing legislation, the option is not politically viable at this time. Since the objective is to maximize adult literacy training in order to ensure that the nation can survive in a globally interdependent economy, an option in which the means becomes so controversial that the end is lost is not the most desirable course of action.

Option Two: Creation of an Independent Agency on Adult Literacy

This option would create a new sub-Cabinet agency similar to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration or the National Academy of Science. The creation of an independent agency would make a powerful statement about the commitment of the federal government to mount a concerted attack on the nation's adult illiteracy problem. The agency, titled something like the National Adult and Workplace Literacy

Administration, would be responsible for administering all existing and future federal legislation whose primary mission is adult literacy or basic skills training and education. It would be responsible for planning and coordinating all existing and future federal legislation whose secondary mission is adult literacy or basic skills training and education. Therefore, the agency would operate only an enhanced and expanded adult basic skills program, but would be responsible for the coordination of all federal adult literacy initiatives. In order to ensure that the administrator of the agency can effectively carry out the coordination responsibility, a Coordinating Council on Adult and Workplace Literacy, composed of the administrator of each of the programs which authorize adult basic skills or adult literacy instruction would be required by Congress. The administrator of the new agency would chair the council.

The new agency would also be responsible for developing and administering program and client accountability measures and standards, the development and refinement of model Individual Learning Plans, data collection and reporting, and developing and maintaining dissemination networks.

Since program coordination and planning is equally desirable at the state level, a Governor's Coordinating Council on Adult and Workplace Literacy would also be required, composed of the heads of those state agencies which most closely parallel the federal agencies represented on the federal Coordinating Council. The creation of a State Adult Literacy Administration would also be authorized but not required. Governors would be allowed to create their own state literacy structure as long as

the program and reporting requirements of the National Adult Literacy Administration were met.

There are several advantages to this option. It emphasizes a federal rededication and recommitment to an issue of growing national importance. It is a low cost option in terms of both disruption and dollars. The structure provides for the continuation of existing activities while allowing for the undertaking of new ones. It removes the administration of adult literacy initiatives from a federal agency, which by nature and tradition is child, not adult, oriented. It provides an organization through which all the structural weaknesses of the current system are eliminated. It should be much more politically acceptable than option one. It incorporates or accommodates most, if not all, of several proposals currently being discussed by Congressional representatives and public and private interest groups.

There are obviously several disadvantages to this option as well. First, all program administrative responsibilities will not reside in a single federal agency. (It must be noted that in the minds of some, that is an advantage rather than a disadvantage.) Second, it requires an action by both the Administrative and Congressional branches of government. Third, and probably most important, it adds yet another agency to what some view as an already bloated federal bureaucracy. Although this cption is the most desirable, like the first option, it is probably politically unacceptable. Unfortunately, therefore, we are forced to turn to the least desirable option from a programmatic standpoint but the most realistic option from a political and legislative standpoint.

Option Three: Strengthen the Existing Structure

This option would retain the 12 or more current federal programs in the five or six different agencies in which they now exist. Consequently, the Adult Education Act would be retained in the U.S. Department of Education. To address the issues of adults being dealt with in an agency devoted to children and youth, a Congressionally mandated Office of Adult and Workplace Literacy, headed by an Assistant Secretary, would be created in the Department of Education. In addition, this new office would be made responsible for overall planning and coordination of all federal adult literacy programs.

Current funding levels could be increased, especially in the state grant and national program portions of the Adult Education Act. Again, the Coordinating Council on Adult and Workplace Literacy described in Option Two, would be created by Congress. In this way, the Assistant Secretary for Adult and Workplace Literacy would be assured that the cross agency planning and coordination function could be carried out.

The Assistant Secretary would be responsible for developing, in cooperation with the Director of the U.S. Department of Education's Center for Statistics and the coordinating council, a federal data collection, analysis, and reporting program for all federal legislation which authorizes adult literacy or basic skills training. As in Option Two, the newly elevated organization would also be responsible for developing and administering program and client accountability measures and standards, developing and refining model Individual Learning Plans, and developing and maintaining dissemination networks.

As in Option Two, in order to ensure program coordination and planning at the state level, a Governor's Coordinating Council on Adult and Workplace Literacy would also be required, composed of the heads of those state agencies which most closely parallel the federal agencies represented on the federal Coordinating Council. The creation of a State Adult Literacy Administration would also be authorized but not required. Governors would be allowed to create their own state literacy structure, as long as the program and reporting requirements of the National Adult Literacy Administration were met. Finally, the Assistant Secretary would be responsible for developing plans and procedures for meeting the short- and long-term objectives discussed below.

The virtue of this option is that it requires the least amount of change to the current structure, practices, and procedures to implement. It should generate the least opposition from the current service providers.

The disadvantage of this option is that it essentially maintains the status quo. And as has been shown, the status quo is sadly inadequate. In addition, this option leaves to the federal and state education structure the administrative responsibility for the literacy initiative. This is one of the most serious structural weaknesses of the current Adult Education Act. Even so, for political and practical reasons, this option is the most logical immediate solution.

New Goals for a New Century

As logical as this solution might be, its adoption, without federal intervention, would represent a necessary but not sufficient response to

the existing weaknesses in the federal adult literacy initiative. Nor does the adoption of this solution ensure the creation of a systematic and cohesive federal policy toward this nation's adult literacy problem. As this paper has described, the current federal initiatives in the enhancement of adult literacy are characterized by a series of programmatic, organizational, and structural weaknesses. If we are to appropriately address the imperative for a literate work force for the 21st century, these weaknesses must be corrected. The implementation of Option Three by Congress and the administration would provide the framework through which these weaknesses could be addressed. However, the realities of the political process ensure that no single approach will be successful nor will a series of uncoorelated and episodic changes ensure that, over time, the most effective and consistent federal policies will be enacted. Consequently, if we are to ever hope for a coherent and cohesive federal adult literacy program, it will be necessary to adopt a series of new federal goals and objectives explicitly designed to correct the existing weaknesses. In addition, since the development of federal policy is an evolutionary process, both short- and long-term objectives need to be developed and articulated. Using Option Three as the framework, this section proposes a series of short- and long-term objectives which represent a systematic approach to correcting each weakness discussed in this paper. Each weakness is restated and the short-term or interim objective, as well as the long-term objective for correcting that specific weakness or combination of weaknesses, is discussed:

Unnecessary Fragmentation of Federal Programs

- Short-term objective: Assign planning and coordination responsibilities for all federal programs authorizing the provision of basic skills to the newly authorized Assistant Secretary for Adult and Workplace Literacy, as proposed in Option Three.

- Long-term objective: In order to maximize the delivery of services to adults in need of skill enhancement, Congress should consolidate the operation, planning, and coordination of all federal adult literacy programs into a single federal agency, devoted exclusively to adult literacy, outside the Department of Education. This objective recognizes that although Option Three initially represents the most politically acceptable solution, the ideal solution would be the ultimate creation of a separate agency devoted to adult literacy.

Inconsistent and Contradictory Purposes

- Short-term objective: As a part of the legislative change required to implement Option Three, Congress should mandate a study to develop consensus on a series of goals for the federal adult education initiative, to be implemented by the new research agency discussed below. Examples of the types of goals which might be adopted are suggested below. These are illustrative only and are not intended as concrete recommendations:

  - "On the assumption that 30 percent of all Americans need some type of literacy enhancement, it is the goal of the federal government to reduce this population by 50 percent by the beginning of the 21st Century and further reduce this population to 10 percent by 2010."

  - "It is the goal of the federal government that every displaced worker will have access to a federal, state, local, or corporate funded training or retraining program within 90 days of displacement, which is designed to make the individual reemployable as soon as the training has been completed."

  - "It is the goal of the federal government that any legal immigrant will have attained appropriate basic skills to meet his or her individual needs within three years of entry into the United States."

- Long-term objective: Ensure that newly proposed or enacted federal adult legislative initiatives are consistent with and supportive of the federal goals for adult literacy established through the procedure recommended above.

No Systematic Research Agenda

- Short-term objective: Create, as a part of the new Office of Adult and Workplace Literacy, a National Center for Adult Learning mandated to carry out applied research and development, technology transfer to adult literacy, professional and volunteer staff development and professionalization, and serve as a clearinghouse for research findings. This objective would only be implemented if the long-term objective described next could not be accomplished in a reasonable period. This short-term objective is intended to ensure that the current lack of a research agenda is not perpetuated if the separate agency proposed below cannot be realized immediately.

- Long-term objective: As suggested by several other groups and individuals, create, as a quasi governmental agency outside any existing federal organization, a National Center for Adult Learning which would have the same responsibilities as described under the short-term objective. In addition, in order to adequately fund the research and development activity, Congress should require the development of a formula to generate $50 million annually, which would be applied to the annual appropriation of each federal law authorizing basic skills instruction described earlier in this paper. The $50 million generated through this formula for each current and future act would be transferred annually to the National Center for Adult Learning for its programmatic and operational expenses. In this way, no new funds would be required for the new Center, and yet, each program currently providing funds for adult literacy would make an appropriate but minimal contribution to the development and maintenance of a support system for adult literacy.

No Accountability At Any Level

- Short-term objective: Require the Assistant Secretary for the Office of Adult and Workplace Literacy, working in conjunction with administrators in the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Agriculture, to develop performance standards for state and local administrators of adult literacy programs. These standards would be designed to improve the quality of instruction as well as reduce the high level of noncompletion in existing programs. The performance standards originally included but not enacted into law in the newly authorized Title V, Jobs for Employable Dependent Individuals Incentive Bonus Program should be reviewed carefully in carrying out this provision.

- Long-term objective: Require the Assistant Secretary to develop a Task Force of government and nongovernment experts to develop the content and procedures for administering to each adult learner an Individualized Learning Plan (ILP), which will provide an appropriately sequenced plan of instruction for each

adult receiving federally supported basic skills instruction. In addition, based upon the performance standards and the Individualized Learning Plan, the Assistant Secretary will be required, working in conjunction with representatives of appropriate federal agencies, to ultimately develop an accountability system which links funding of service providers to performance.

No Structured Data Collection and Reporting System

- Short-term objective: As described in Option Three, the Assistant Secretary, in cooperation with the Director of the U.S. Department Education's Center for Statistics and the coordinating council, would design, field test, and implement a data collection and reporting system. Fully utilizing technology, reliable data on such things as adult learner characteristics, expenditures, completion rates, and employment and achievements of the objectives contained in the Individualized Learning Plan would be collected, analyzed, and reported for the participants in the Adult Education Act.

- Long-term objective: After field testing and refinement with the Adult Education Act program, this data collection and reporting system would be expanded to include all federal programs which authorize and provide basic skills or basic literacy instruction.

No Effective Dissemination System

- This weakness is corrected through the creation and funding of the National Center for Adult Learning discussed previously.

No Coordination or Cooperation Among and Between Programs

- This problem is corrected by the assignment of planning and coordination responsibilities for all federal adult literacy initiatives to the new Office of Adult and Workplace Literacy and the requirement to create a federal and state Coordinating Council for Adult and Workplace Literacy. These provisions are discussed in Option Three.

Seriously Inadequate Funding

- Short-term objective: Appropriate funds for the Adult Education Act to the full authorization level of $200 million. In addition, fully fund Title III, Part C, Adult Training, Retraining and Employment Development of the Carl Perkins Vocational Education Act at a minimum of $50 million annually.

- Long-term objective: Provide sufficient funds to reduce the number of adults currently requiring literacy enhancement by 50 percent by the year 2000.

The Primary Federal Adult Literacy Program is Embedded in the Nation's Public Secondary and Postsecondary System

- Short-term objective: Elevate the program to the highest level possible within the Department of Education to eliminate layers of nonadult oriented administrators.

- Long-term objective: Again, the more difficult but programmatically desirable solution would be to ultimately consolidate all federal programs authorizing expenditures for adult literacy into a single federal agency outside the Department of Education.

The weaknesses described above are not only repeated at the state and local level, but have lead to the development and evolution of a delivery system that is characterized by the following additional weaknesses at the state and local levels:

Little Professionalism Among Service Providers and,

Inappropriate Dependence on Volunteer Teachers

- Short-term objective: Establish a requirement of a minimum of 30 hours of training for all entering adult literacy volunteers and a minimum of 30 hours of in-service instruction for all current volunteers during the year following the effective date of the requirement. Through the formula establishing a set-aside for the National Center for Adult Learning, establish at least one adult undergraduate and graduate teacher training program in each state. The suggested 30 hours of training is illustrative. The exact amount of necessary training should be established by experts in this area.

- Long-term objective: Professionalize the adult basic education teaching force by establishing a national goal of 50 percent full-time instructors by 2000 and 75 percent by 2020. Again, the 50 and 75 percent are only illustrative. What is required, irrespective of the final agreed upon percentage, is an appropriate mix between full- and part-time instructors.

Outmoded Curricular Materials and No Systematic Procedure or Process for Updating Them

Limited Use of Technology in Adult Literacy Courses and,

No Network of Professionals

- These weaknesses would be addressed and corrected by the creation of the National Center for Adult Learning recommended

earlier, which among other things, would be responsible for curriculum development, technology application, and establishing and maintaining professional networks and a clearinghouse.

Excessive Dropout Rates

- The provisions of Option Three and the objectives relating to accountability discussed above should result in a significantly reduced dropout rate at the local program level.

The correction of existing weaknesses in the federal adult literacy program must be accomplished through a two-pronged approach. However, implementing the provisions of the preferred organizational changes as outlined in Option Three, as well as the short- and long-term objectives discussed above, should systematically address the weaknesses inherent in the current federal literacy initiatives. Obviously, to accomplish these needed changes will require a commitment by Congress, federal policymakers, and especially the new administration, to undertake a series of legislative and organizational amendments and changes. Given the magnitude of the problems and weaknesses associated with the current federal adult literacy initiatives, and the danger to the nation if they are not solved, not to do so will be a serious disservice to current and future generations of Americans.

CONCLUSION

For almost 25 years federal, state, and local agencies have been attempting to reduce the pool of adults in our society who need improved and enhanced basic skills. If the nation's public education system has suffered from a "rising tide of mediocrity," 23/ the nation's adult literacy system has suffered from a consistent trickle of indifference. We are at a point

in the nation's history where continued inattention to adult literacy could lead to the sinking of this country to third world status--both socially and economically. We are, therefore, at a crossroads. By all analyses and indications, simply doing more of the same will not suffice. Indeed, the structure by which we have been attempting to enhance adult literacy in this nation for the last decade is flawed and inefficient. We must rededicate ourselves to a significant reduction of the illiterate pool. In addition, we must develop a new structure to deliver adult literacy services. Only then will we ensure ourselves an adequately skilled and competitive labor force for the next century. The creation of a new federal agency devoted to the enhancement of adult literacy represents a politically viable solution to a compelling national problem. In so doing, we have a chance to change the trickle of indifference to a flood of dedication.

APPENDIX A

NOTES

NOTES

NOTE NO.	PAGE	CITATION
		THE HISTORY OF FEDERAL INVOLVEMENT IN ADULT LITERACY
1	10	Adult Education Act amendments of 1974. See also An Historical Perspective: The Adult Education Act 1964 - 1974 The National Advisory Council on Adult Education, March 1976, Washington, D.C.
2	20	Adult Illiteracy in the United States, Hunter and Harman, Chapter 3, pg. 70. In addition, Kozal, in Illiterate America and Chall, et.al., in "Adult Literacy: New and Enduring Problems" and Mikulecky, The Status of Literacy in Our Society all estimate the size of the dropout problem as being greater than one third of the participants.
3	22	Almost all analysts of adult literacy support this characterization. See Harman, Illiteracy: A National Dilemma, and Kozal, Illiterate America.
		FEDERAL ADULT LITERACY PROGRAMS
4	26	See Table 3, page 15, of the report prepared for the Federal Interagency Committee on Education by the Washington Consulting Group, Inc. Literacy Management Information Project Report, Volume I, Washington, D.C., May, 1986.
5	27	Taken from page 1 of the Staff report of the Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary and Vocational Education, Serial No. 100-H, "An Assessment of the Federal Initiative in the Area of Adult Literacy", Washington, D.C., April 1987.
6	29	See particularly Public Law 98-524, Title II, Part A, 98 Stat. 2450 - 2453. (Special note: for those who may not be familiar with it, this is the way pages are numbered in federal legislation.) Adult literacy activities are authorized in three separate parts of the Act found in these pages.
7	30	Basic skills are referred to again in the same law, page, 98 Stat. 2459.

NOTE NO.	PAGE	CITATION
8	31	Special literacy activities for adult Indians are authorized in P.L. 100-297, Subpart 3, Section 5330, 102 Stat. 410.
9	33	Federal funds to assist libraries in providing adult literacy services are authorized in P.L. 98-480, Title I, Section 101, 98 Stat. 2236. See also Section 109 (4), 98 Stat. 2240, and Section 601, 98 Stat. 2245.
10	35	Work Incentive programs are found in HHS under Section 433(d) of Part C, Title IV of this Act.
11	35	P.L. 97-35, Section 675(c)(1)(A) and (B), authorizes training as one way to eliminate poverty.
12	38	JTPA programs for adults are described in P.L. 97-300, Section 106(b)(1), 96 Stat. 1333.
		PROGRAMS AUTHORIZED SINCE 1985
13	41	Workplace Literacy program. P.L. 100-297, Section 371(a)(1), 102 Stat. 314.
14	41	English Literacy program. Same as above, Section 372, 102 Stat. 316 - 317.
15	42	Workplace literacy for the homeless. P.L. 100-77, Section 702(a), 101 Stat. 525.
16	42	Even start program. An adult/child care intergenerational program. P.L. 100-297, Sections 1051 through 1059, 102 Stat. 167 - 172.
17	43	Institutional Development program. See Higher Education Amendments of 1986, P.L. 99-498, Section 111(a)(4), 100 Stat. 1280.
18	44	Same Act but program focuses on staff development. Section 113, 100 Stat. 1284 - 1285.
19	46	See pages 26-33 of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Amendments Act of 1988 Conference Report (Report 100-1089), October 13, 1988.

NOTE NO.	PAGE	CITATION
20	47	Employment and training program of the Food Stamp Act. See P.L. 100-435, Title IV, Section 404.

THE FEDERAL ADULT INITIATIVE IN SUMMARY

21	52	Taken from a document titled Department of Education Directory: Adult - Serving Programs in the U.S. Department of Education, prepared by the Division of Adult Education, Washington, D.C., August 1988.
22	56	From an undated proposal developed by the Working Group on Adult Literacy entitled, "National Adult Literacy Policy: A Proposal."
23	68	A partial quote from a sentence on page 5 of the U. S. Department of Education publication, A Nation At Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform. The full sentence states, "We report to the American people that while we can take justifiable pride in what our schools and colleges have historically accomplished and contributed to the United States and the well-being of its people, the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people."

APPENDIX B

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